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HEALTHNET NEWS

A newsletter for public librarians and others interested in consumer health information services

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UPDATE

Healthnet is sponsoring a program on consumer information on environmental health and toxicology. "What's That Smell? Information on Toxicology, Environmental Health, and Chemicals" will be held on Thursday, June 23, 2005 at the Middletown Library Service Center. The program will start promptly at 9:00 a.m. and end at noon. The instructor for the class is Donna Berryman, Outreach Coordinator for the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, New England Region.



This free hands on training program is for reference librarians who work in public libraries and may be confronted with consumer questions related to environmental health, hazardous substances, and toxicology. There will be a review of several National Library of Medicine information databases including: ToxTown; Household Products Database, Hazardous Substances Data Bank, and ToxMap. The program will help answer questions such as: I heard that spray air fresheners shouldn't be used in homes. Are they safe? What are the short and long term effects of exposure to the chemical formaldehyde? A company in my neighborhood releases something in the air that has a bad smell. Is there anyway I can find out what is causing this odor and if it is toxic?

To register for the class, print off the registration form at <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet/regisenviro.pdf> and mail or fax it to the address or fax number indicated. The registration deadline is June 17, 2005.

PROFESSIONAL READING

RESOURCES ON SLEEP AND SLEEP DISORDERS

Most of us spend at least a third of our lives sleeping. While adults require an average of six to eight hours of sleep, over 60 million of us suffer from insomnia or excessive daytime sleepiness. Insomnia, the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep is not really a disease itself, but a symptom of a psychological or medical condition or treatment (depression, chronic pain, certain medications) or such everyday common complaints such as boredom, poor eating habits, or lack of exercise. Some sleep disorders are serious and can endanger a person's health. Sleep apnea, the cessation of breathing during sleep, if left untreated is potentially fatal and increases a person's risk for high blood pressure and heart disease. Narcolepsy, a rare nervous system disorder causes excessive sleepiness, muscle weakness, hallucinations, and sleep paralysis, and can be life threatening if not treated.

Eris Weaver, Medical Librarian and Community Health Educator for the Petaluma Health Care District's Redwood Health Library in northern California, has developed a list of thirteen books and two websites on sleep and sleep disorders. The list is in the January 2005 issue of **Library Journal**.

The list includes general works on sleep and insomnia, alternative therapies for sleep disorders, snoring and sleep apnea, women and sleep, and rare disorders such as night terrors, narcolepsy, and restless leg syndrome. The two websites noted are MedlinePlus (<http://medlineplus.gov/>) and The Sleep Well (<http://www.stanford.edu/~dement>).

All items on the list are briefly described and have title, author, publisher and price information. Items with a star (nine out of thirteen) are those recommended for all public libraries.

Weaver E. A good night's sleep. **Library Journal** 2005 January;65-67.



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BEST CONSUMER HEALTH BOOKS OF 2004

Barbara Bibel, Reference Librarian, Science/Social Science/Government Documents Department, Oakland (CA) Public Library, has put together a list for **Library Journal** of consumer health books she considers to be the best for 2004. The list has 23 titles divided into 10 categories. No surprise that the category of “Cancer “ has the most titles (eight). There are four titles listed in the category “Elder Care”, also no surprise considering the aging population in the United States and that many baby boomers are caring for children as well as their elderly parents.

Other categories include caregiving, children’s health, drugs (the only title is an “*expose*” of the pharmaceutical industry), emergency medicine (one title about the burn unit at Massachusetts General Hospital), general medicine, personal narrative, weight loss (no, not Atkins or the South Beach diet), and women’s health.

Each title has a brief description and includes the author, title, publisher, date, number of pages, and price. This seems to be a highly subjective list since Bibel does not include the criteria she used to select the titles. Many of the titles appear to offer useful, practical information, such as Virginia Morris’ **How to Care for Aging Parents** and **American Cancer Society’s Complete Guide to Prostate Cancer**. Other titles are extended essays on a contemporary area of medical care with a historical perspective such as Marcia Angell’s **The Truth About the Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What to Do About It** and Barbara Ravage’s **Burn Unit: Saving Lives After the Flames**. All of the titles, however, deserve a look to determine their suitability for your consumer health collection.

An accompanying article describes forthcoming titles in consumer health as publishers try to respond to the information needs of 77 million baby boomers.

Bibel B. Best consumer health books of 2004. **Library Journal** 2005 May 1; 54 – 57.

Kuzyk R. Life in the middle ages. **Library Journal** 2005 May 1; 58, 60-61.

TIPS ON CONSUMER HEALTH BOOK SELECTION

How does one make certain that the books they select for their library’s consumer health collection are of high quality, accurate, and authoritative? Many rely on reviews from publications such as **Library Journal** or **Publishers Weekly**. These publications, however, may not have descriptions or reviews of many new titles. There is, of course, Amazon which has reviews, but these reviews may not be entirely objective since there are some who believe that friends or co-workers of a book’s author can very easily send in a glowing report on a title that has many shortcomings.

Howard Fuller, a consumer health librarian at Stanford Hospital and Clinics’ Health Library in Palo Alto, California, has some sound advice for those who are concerned about the quality of the titles in their health collections. To determine the quality of a library’s health collection, Fuller believes that rather than relying on whether the information in the books is “bad” or out-of-date, librarians should ask themselves “Is the information to which I direct patrons either scientifically based or evidence-based?” Even alternative or complementary medicine books can be scientifically based or evidence-based.

How is the public librarian to determine if each book is scientifically or evidence based? Unfortunately, Fuller doesn’t explain what these terms mean and how a public librarian, who may be called upon to be an expert in many fields when it comes to book selection, can tell if a title is based on sound scientific studies and if there is a body of evidence in the medical literature that supports what the author is stating. One way to determine this is to look for a listing of references to the facts stated in the book. But this is often difficult because one has to actually examine the book since not all reviews include this information.

Fuller does offer other suggestions to help make the health book selection easier. He advises librarians to use the same book vendor they use for their other non-health books and not to rely on vendors who sell only health and medical books. He cautions that it is not a good idea to rely on the vendor’s catalog since the descriptions would not be objective.

Fuller recommends that one of the best ways to build or update consumer health collections is to purchase titles from reputable publishers who publish a series on this topic. He lists ten publishers, such as Johns Hopkins University Press, Mayo Clinic Press, John Wiley and Sons, and Harvard Health Publications that have high quality series on consumer

health topics. One advantage of ordering books from these series is that they often continue in perpetuity. Publishers also offer new titles in their series and update titles with new editions.

Fuller also mentions that professional societies such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Diabetes Association publish resources on consumer health topics.

Fuller H. Consumer health collecting made easy: a librarian prescribes a remedy for understocked medical-advice shelves. **American Libraries** 2005 May; 47-48.

NETNEWS

CONSUMER REPORTS BEST BUY DRUGS

The cost and effectiveness of prescription drugs are ongoing, serious concerns for many health consumers. Many Americans are unable to fill prescriptions for medications their doctors have recommended because of their high prices. In an effort to clarify which medications in six specific categories provide safe, effective, and cost-efficient treatment, the **Consumers Union** organization, publisher of Consumer Reports magazine, has initiated the **Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs** website at <http://www.crbestbuydrugs.org/index.html>. Its goal is to provide knowledge about the “comparative value of prescription drugs.”



The consumer-directed Drug Reports currently available at the website discuss ACE inhibitors to treat high blood pressure, beta-blockers to treat high blood pressure and heart disease, antidepressants, cholesterol-lowering statin drugs, NSAID drugs to treat osteoarthritis and pain, and proton pump inhibitor drugs for treatment of heartburn and ulcers. Additional reports are planned each month for the next two years. The topics for upcoming reports include calcium channel blockers, antihistamines, attention deficit disorder medications, estrogens, and Alzheimer medications. The reports range from eleven to twenty-two pages in length. They may be downloaded from the website in Adobe Acrobat format.

Based on reviews of scientific studies, the reports are intended for consumers to use in discussions with their physicians or pharmacists. In comparing medications, the reports sometimes make specific recommendations for less expensive, but equally effective medications. The reviews of scientific research studies were written by physicians and researchers from the Oregon Health and Science University Evidence-based Practice Center, a component of the twelve state Drug Effectiveness Review Project. A member of the Oregon team gathered relevant information from the group's technical reports for incorporation in the Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug Reports. Within each report, a web address is provided for the lengthy, original report, written in technical medical terms. References to specific research studies are provided at the end of the report. Medication prices used for comparison are based on national average retail prices paid at pharmacies.

Since the recommendations for specific drugs could change in the future as more research is conducted, price adjustments are made, and less expensive generic drugs are produced when drug patents expire, the website plans to monitor these changes monthly.

The website is funded by the Engelberg Foundation, a charitable trust, and a grant from the National Library of Medicine of the National Institutes of Health.

The reports are reviewed by a panel of physicians and pharmacy consultants who are paid for their contributions. Any affiliations they may have with drug companies is stated on the website.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The following books are recommended for public libraries and health sciences libraries with consumer health collections. They are not part of the UCHC library collection.

Bringing Up Baby. Three Steps to Making Good Decisions in Your Child's First Years. Claire Lerner and Amy Laura Dombro. Zero to Three Press, 2005. 110 p. (0-943657-78-4) \$14.95 .

Effective parenting styles may be very different, even within the same family. Authors Claire Lerner and Amy Laura Dombro guide parents in determining not only their own parenting styles but also the temperament of their infants and toddlers. Active, outgoing children may require different childrearing approaches than reserved, hesitant children. According to the authors, this insight will help parents to adapt their parenting decisions to the needs of their child and themselves.

Ms. Lerner and Ms. Dombro are staff members and consultants to Zero to Three, a national, nonprofit organization that focuses on educating parents and teachers of young children in successful, compassionate childrearing.

This brief, realistic guide to the challenges of parenting a child who may not yet be able to verbalize her needs or feelings will be especially helpful to first time parents. Many realistic scenarios involving children with different "personal styles," set within the contexts of home, grocery stores, and childcare settings, serve as examples of parenting challenges and appropriate parental responses. There are many descriptions of effective ways to handle specific parenting situations at varying stages of development, e.g. sleep difficulties, parent departure at child care, aggressiveness toward playmates, temper tantrums, resistance to foods, frustration with new toys and puzzles, childrearing disagreements with a parenting partner.

The appendix includes narrative charts that describe young children's developmental progress, children's feelings that accompany specific developmental stages, and suggested parental behaviors and responses. There are also questions from parents and lengthy, thoughtful responses from the authors. This is a valuable, sensitive guide to parenting young children.

Delivered from Distraction. Getting the Most out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder. Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey. Ballantine Books, 2005. 380 p. (0-345-44230-X) \$25.95 .

Psychiatrists Hallowell and Ratey, specialists in the diagnosis and treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder and self-described as "two men who have ADD themselves" have updated their landmark, consumer-focused 1994 publication about ADD in children and adults, **Driven to Distraction**. This revision has the benefit of a decade of advances in ADD diagnosis and treatment.

The authors point out the positive creative and energetic characteristics of individuals with ADD as well as the difficulties. They discuss how ADD is appropriately diagnosed, describe the emerging use of two brain function tests and explain how to talk about ADD to a newly diagnosed child. The book includes the risks and benefits of treating ADD with medications and the roles of exercise and nutrition in treating ADD.

Chapters focus on the experiences of real life families and their efforts to resolve family conflicts that often arise when symptoms such as lack of impulse control and resistance to following rules incite disagreements. The authors recommend specific problem solving techniques.

A resource guide of books, websites, and organizations includes sources for locating coaches who help guide a person with ADD to follow successful strategies in organizing their lives and achieving personal goals.

Enhanced by humor and case histories, this is a realistic, helpful, true-to-life portrayal of the difficulties of living with ADD and being the close friend or relative of an individual struggling with ADD.

Help Your Teenager Beat an Eating Disorder. Jack Lock and Daniel Le Grange. Guilford Press, 2005. 296 p. (ISBN 1-57230-908-3 paperback, 1-59385-101-4 hardcover), \$16.95.

When an adolescent has an eating disorder, parents, siblings, friends, and relatives, as well as the youngster, experience stress and frustration. Very often, therapy programs discourage parents from becoming directly involved in treating

these potentially life-threatening illnesses. This approach leaves parents even more stressed and confused.

Relying on their extensive experience treating children and adolescents with anorexia nervosa and bulimia and researching these illnesses, authors James Lock and Daniel le Grange, a physician and psychologist, provide information directed to parents. They advocate a treatment method in which “parents are an integral part,” with the therapist functioning as the parents’ consultant.

In this practical, compassionate, and comprehensive book, they describe diagnostic signs and symptoms, medical complications, current treatments, and many scenarios for parent cooperation in helping a child resume healthy eating habits. They explain the thinking processes unique to adolescents with anorexia and bulimia.

The book includes a resource guide to diagnostic and treatment centers in the United States and other countries.

Listening to Fear. Helping Kids Cope, from Nightmares to the Nightly News. Steven Marans. Henry Holt and Company, 2005. 257 p. (0-8050-7604-2) \$15.00 pap.

Children often express their fears to parents, but in ways that are far from evident. Unable or unwilling to verbalize them, they often demonstrate them with behavior that, for them, is far from the norm. The challenge for parents is to interpret this behavior and help children deal realistically with their fears. Dr. Steven Marans, professor of child psychoanalysis, associate professor of psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine, and director of the National Center for Children Exposed to Violence, provides an understanding guide for parents confounded by the fears and corresponding difficult behaviors of their children from birth to young adulthood. He uses detailed narratives to illustrate children’s responses to anxiety and fear at different stages of development and positive ways parents have responded to them.

The examples and his advice to parents are relevant and contemporary. He introduces the book by relaying a personal story of his experience driving his teenage son and some of his son’s friends into Manhattan nearly two years after the September 11 attacks. As they approached midtown Manhattan, their relaxed, joking exchanges ceased and their mood changed to bravado and then silence as they reached the World Trade Center site.

Because the normal fears of childhood and adolescence are intensified by current events, this is an especially helpful book for parents seeking an understanding of their children’s concerns and ways to comfort them and help them deal successfully with their fears.

The book concludes with a chapter on helping children “when disaster strikes” and responses to questions children and parents may pose about war and terrorism.

The New Harvard Guide to Women’s Health. Karen J. Carlson M.D., Stephanie A. Eisenstat M.D., Terra Ziporyn Ph.D. Harvard University Press, 2004. 688 p. (ISBN 0-674-01282-8 cloth, ISBN 0-674-01343-3, pap.) \$37.40 hardcover, \$24.95 pap.



Since the 1996 publication of the first edition of this comprehensive overview of women’s health concerns, there have been new medical discoveries and developments in treatments. Reports from the Women’s Health Initiative have discussed dangers of estrogen replacement therapy. New diagnostic technologies are more frequently used. Both the first edition and the updated guide were written by three women authors, two physicians affiliated with Harvard Medical School, and a medical journalist.

The book is comprised of more than 300 topics, each discussed in two to four pages using consumer-friendly language. The topics range from premenstrual syndrome to artificial sweeteners, calcium, antianxiety drugs, dilation and curettage, kegel exercises, and ovarian cysts. Most topics and a great deal of the text are the same as the first edition, but the authors have added information about airbags, and antiphospholipid antibody syndrome and have updated the discussion of cholesterol and dieting, including a chart of popular diets and information about weight loss medications.

Subjects are listed alphabetically in the table of contents. The index includes entries for main topics, cross-references to relevant main topics, and both generic and brand names of drugs discussed in the text. A topically arranged resource guide directs readers to health organizations that may be of assistance.

Raising a Secure Child. Creating an Emotional Connection Between You and Your Child. Zeynep Biringen. Berkley Publishing Group, 2004. 317 p. (ISBN 0-399-52994-2 paperback), \$15.95.

Many parents are concerned about including enough “quality time” with their children in their hectic daily schedules. Spending a great deal of time with one’s child may not build a solid relationship if the parent is not emotionally, as well as physically, available. A parent’s emotional availability, which can be measured, plays a strong role in determining if a child is able to form bonds with others in adulthood and cope with daily challenges.

In this consumer-friendly book, based on scientific research related to attachment theory conducted by herself and others, as well as her parenting experiences, child psychologist Zeynep Biringen provides specifics on evaluating a parent’s emotional availability and suggestions for handling daily parent-child interactions in an emotionally positive way. Her parenting advice encompasses children from infancy to adolescence.

Dr. Biringen enriches the book by relating case histories of parent-child interactions that demonstrate examples of positive and negative parenting. She provides specific examples of ways to demonstrate interest and warmth toward a child while being involved in other responsibilities and activities. She is encouraging to parents concerned about a child’s very reserved or overly aggressive personality style, telling parents that a great deal of a child’s emotional connectivity is under the control of the parent. She reassures parents that conveying emotional availability to your child does not require “perfect parenting!”

Detailed background information about the author and her research is available on her website at <http://www.emotionalavailability.com>

When a Parent Has Cancer. A Guide to Caring for Your Children. Wendy Schlessel Harpham. Perennial Currents, 2004. 198 p. (0-06-074081-7) \$14.95 pap.

Physician Wendy Schlessel Harpham, author of **After Cancer: A Guide to Your New Life** and **Diagnosis Cancer: Your Guide Through the First Few Months**, has updated the 1997 edition of her valuable, practical guide to helping parents support their children while they are undergoing cancer therapy. Her compassionate advice is based on her personal experience as a cancer patient and parent.

The book is enhanced by a brief children’s story book, **Becky and the Worry Cup**, about the expected anxiety and anger experienced by children in this situation, which is inserted in the back cover. Many Connecticut public libraries own the 1997 edition. The text of both editions is the same. The newer edition, however, concludes with an extensive new section, entitled “Caring for the Children When Cancer Recurs or Becomes a Chronic Disease,” and an updated “Conclusion” that incorporates new insights Dr. Harpham has learned.



*Healthnet News is written by Alberta L. Richetelle and Judith Kronick.
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut public libraries,
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